

THE CREATION – THE SEVENTH DAY

Genesis 2:1-7

The lesson in all the classes should begin with some brief discussion of the nature and purpose of the Bible, followed by emphasis on its first book and on its first verse, and then a very brief review of the first six days of creation. The notes for the various age groups will suggest the level at which this review should be carried in each class. Not more than half the lesson time should be used for this introductory work.

Doctrinal Points

The first thing we should know about the Lord is that He is the Creator of all things.

The Word begins with the development of man. Regeneration is a gradual process and follows a certain order.

It is the higher plane of the mind—the ability to know God—which distinguishes man from the animals.

The sabbath state of rest is attained only through learning the Lord's truth and obeying it.

Notes for Parents

As we have observed before, *Genesis* means *the beginning*, and the first words we read in the Bible are, “In the beginning God.” God is the beginning of everything. Nothing in the world created itself. And in the very last chapter of the Bible we read, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.” The Bible was written through many men over a period of hundreds of years, but it is one book by one Author. The Lord is the beginning and the end of it.

The story of creation is a wonderful allegory or parable given us by the Lord to teach us how we are developed, once “light” dawns in our minds. We begin in ignorance—“without form and void”—

and pass through the long processes of learning and living the truth as the Lord gives it to us, receiving ever more and more of His spirit, until finally, if we are faithful, we come into that happy state when we trust and obey Him gladly. Then, when our selfish and worldly desires have been overcome, we no longer have to struggle with temptations. This is the rest of the sabbath.

The weekly day of rest was ordained by the Lord because we need it. Our bodies and our minds need regular rest and change, but our souls need it even more. If we make Sunday merely a day of idle self-indulgence, our selfish feelings and thoughts—which cause all our troubles—are just as active then as on any other day. There is only one place where our souls can find rest, and that is in the Lord. When the Lord was in the world, He gave us the perfect example of how to live, and He taught us by His own acts how we ought to spend the sabbath day. Luke (4:16) tells us that “as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day.” He taught and healed on the sabbath. He walked through the fields with His disciples and ate with them. And in Matthew 12:12 He gives us one simple rule: “It is lawful to do good on the sabbath.” Let us make Sunday the day when we especially try to “do good,” worshiping the Lord, learning from Him, and trying to forget ourselves and make those about us happy. Then we shall soon learn why the Lord in the beginning “blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.”

Primary

The lesson should always be read before the children are allowed to begin any handwork. Then, as the children work, the teacher may repeat and emphasize any points desired. Stress the fact that happiness comes only from the Lord, and that He can give it to us only as we try to make others happy.

Do you know what book we read and study in Sunday School? It is the Holy Bible. It is also called the Word of God, because in it God speaks to us and tells us about Himself and about heaven and about how we should live so that He will be able to make us happy always. So the Bible is the most wonderful book in the world.

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It is divided into a great many shorter books which we shall study one after another, but in all of them the Lord tells us in interesting stories the things He wants us to know.

The first book in the Bible is called Genesis. *Genesis* means *the beginning*, and it starts with the story of the beginning of the world. Let us read the first five verses of the first chapter.

Then we are told how the Lord went on creating or making everything. On the second day He separated the earth and the heaven by dividing the waters above from the waters below. On the third day He gathered the lower waters into seas and brought forth grass and herbs and fruit trees on the earth. On the fourth day the sun, moon, and stars appeared. On the fifth day the fish and birds were created, and on the sixth day the animals and men and women were created. Now let us go on with our reading. [Read Genesis 2:1-7.]

What did the Lord do on the seventh day?

Verse 3 of chapter 2 tells us why every seventh day is set apart as a day of rest. *Blessed* means made happy, and *sanctified* means made holy.

None of us does just the same things on Sunday as on weekdays.

But some people do not use Sunday as it is meant to be used.

It should be a happy day but it should also be a holy day.

We should use part of it to learn about the Lord and to worship Him.

And we should use all of it in ways which will make us better—more nearly likenesses of the Lord.

Junior

The Juniors are old enough to have met and to know the answer to the problem of Saturday or Sunday as the true sabbath. The greater part of the lesson period, however, should be given to a discussion of the right use of the sabbath. Have them look up the Bible references in their notes.

By what other names do we call the Bible?

Who is its Author?

Why do we study it?

Into what two parts is it divided?

What is the first book in the Bible?

Why is it called *Genesis*?

In how many days or periods was the earth created?

On what day were the sun, moon, and stars created?

What was the final creation?

How does man differ from the animals?

Over what was he given dominion?

What did the Lord do on the seventh day?

You know that no one can work day in and day out without resting. We have to have our rest and sleep every night, but even this is not enough. Once in a while we need a “break,” a change from our usual activities. Otherwise we lose all pleasure in our work; our bodies wear out and our minds grow dull. Our bodies need the regular day of change; our minds need it; and above all our souls need it. The Lord Himself, as we learn in our lesson for today, ordained that every seventh day should be set apart as a day of rest, and the Lord knows what is best for the creatures He has made.

You probably all know people who think they are not obeying this command of the Lord unless they set apart Saturday, which happens to be the seventh day of our calendar week. But we may remember that our calendar did not come into existence for thousands of years after the Lord gave the first people this law; so the law has nothing to do with our calendar week. It prescribes six days of work and then a holy day of rest. The word *sabbath* means rest. The Jews observed and still observe Saturday as their sabbath, but the early Christians chose Sunday, the first day of the calendar week, because it was “the Lord’s Day,” the day on which the Lord arose from the dead.

All of you have probably had some arguments with your parents as to what you should and should not do on Sunday. This is partly because people’s ideas differ as to what is fitting conduct for the day which the Lord has sanctified. *Sanctified* means “made holy.” We learn from the New Testament that the Lord, when He was on earth, disagreed with the Pharisees as to what it was right to do on the sabbath day, and He pointed out to them that He was Lord of the sabbath day.

Since we are all trying to follow the Lord’s example, there are

some things which we may know should be done on Sunday. We should go to church and Sunday School. Look up Luke 4:16. And we should do all we can to be helpful to others on Sunday, for the Lord performed many miracles of healing on the sabbath. His example also shows us that it is right for us to walk and talk with our friends and to eat with them on Sunday. Read Matthew 12:1-8.

In Matthew 12:12 the Lord gives us a general law which we should learn and always keep in mind on Sunday: “It is lawful to do good on the sabbath.” Our souls need this day of rest—rest from the selfish struggle to get what we want. One of the things this may mean for you is that on Sunday more than on any other day you should be obedient and try to make your parents happy. You will find that this will make you happier, too, as the day goes on, for all real happiness comes from unselfishness. If our hearts are filled up with ourselves and what we want, they are closed to the Lord, and it is the Lord’s love flowing into our hearts which can make us happy. Sunday should be a day when our hearts and minds are open to the Lord and eager to learn and do His will. If on Sunday we go to church and Sunday School, enjoy the company of our family and friends, and try to think of things to do which will make those about us happy, we shall be too busy and too happy ourselves to worry about the things we are not allowed to do.

Intermediate

In this lesson our discussion of the spiritual sense has been general and we have suggested no additions to the basic correspondences for this class. Instead, the meaning of the terms *natural*, *spiritual*, and *celestial* should be stressed as a basis for later lessons. The progression may be illustrated by citing the formation of any good habit—from the first natural resistance, through enforced practice, to the time when the good habit has become involuntary. So far as this particular good thing is concerned you have reached the celestial state or sabbath rest. The Intermediates are still young enough to need also the teaching concerning the proper use of Sunday.

In the literal Creation story the essential things to remember are

that God created all things and that He created them gradually according to a certain order; that heaven and earth were the first creations and that the giving of light led to all that followed; that although grass and fruit trees began to appear as soon as the waters were gathered into seas leaving the dry land, it was not until after the appearance of the sun, moon, and stars that living creatures were created; that the order of the creation of living creatures was fish, birds, animals, and finally men and women; that man differed from the animals in that he was created in the image and likeness of God; and that man was given dominion over all the earth and its creatures.

In the spiritual sense we need to remember that this story of creation tells us how the first men and women were developed into a church, and also how any one of us from being wholly natural and worldly may become spiritual and heavenly, a true human being, formed in the image and likeness of God.

Today's lesson takes us to the final step in this story—the seventh day. In the literal sense we have, in the first three verses of the second chapter of Genesis, the account of the ordination of the sabbath as a holy day of rest, coming every seventh day. There is a very obvious lesson for us in the letter. The Lord knows the needs of the people He has created, and if He tells us to observe every seventh day as a day of rest, it is because we need it. Also if it is said that the Lord “blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it,” we know that it is to be not only a day of rest but a holy day. When the Lord was in the world, He gave us a clear example of how to use the sabbath day. He went regularly to the synagogue on that day; He taught and healed on that day; and He walked through the fields with His disciples and ate with them. That is, Sunday should be a day when we go to church and Sunday School, do all we can to be helpful to others, and enjoy the company of our family and friends. Sunday should be a day when we try to put our selfish thoughts and feelings aside, learn about the Lord and worship Him, and practice making other people happy. If we do this, we shall find ourselves also happy on Sunday. Remember

that *blessed* means happy. The Lord gave the Pharisees a simple rule for the observance of the sabbath which we should learn and remember. He said (Matthew 12:12): “It is lawful to do good on the sabbath.”

When we come to the spiritual sense of our lesson, we find that the seventh day pictures the final creation of the first people into a “celestial” church, and the final celestial state which it is possible for any one of us to attain if he is faithful in trying to learn the Lord’s truth and obey it. In the spiritual sense the rest of the sabbath day is not rest from work but rest from fear and worry and from the struggle with temptation. We reach this state of rest only when we come to trust the Lord wholly and to love to do His will, that is, when we come really to love the Lord. We need to know what are meant by the terms *celestial* and *spiritual*, for we shall be using them often. *Celestial* means a state in which we do right spontaneously from love to the Lord. *Spiritual* means a state in which we do right from love to the neighbor in accordance with the truths we have learned from the Word.

What we must especially remember from our study of the Creation story is that we are not born celestial or spiritual, but natural, and that we cannot become celestial without first becoming spiritual.

We all like to think that if we “mean well,” what we do will be right, or at least that when we do things which actually hurt other people, we should be forgiven because we meant well. We need to see that our natural good intentions are not a sufficient guide for our conduct, but that we must constantly be studying the Word to find out what the Lord says is right and to correct our own ideas accordingly. We are all born *natural*; that is, our feelings and ideas are centered about what we see and experience in this world. If we study the Word and correct our ideas and feelings according to the truths we learn there, the Lord can regenerate us and make us *spiritual*. And if we are faithful in this effort to the very end of our life in this world, the Lord can fill our hearts with His own love so that we shall become *celestial*. Then there is no longer any

struggle between what we “naturally” want to do and what we know we ought to do, because we have come to love to do what we ought to do. This is the rest of the sabbath.

The Creation story is summed up for us in the last four verses of our lesson, beginning again with the Lord’s creation of the heavens and the earth—the heavenly and the earthly things in our souls—and ending with man’s becoming a “living soul”—full from inmost to outmost with life from the Lord.

Senior

The emphasis with this class should be on the importance of continued effort to learn and do the Lord’s will, the lifelong repetition of the six days of creation and the sabbath of rest. They also need the lesson on the purpose and use of the sabbath day.

Our lesson for today is centered on the completion of the Creation story, which is summed up for us in Genesis 2:4-7. The heavens and the earth picture our spiritual and our natural faculties and the six days of creation the process by which, if we develop as we should, our natural faculties are educated and brought into orderly subjection to the spiritual—which is the process of regeneration. Verse 7 is a still briefer summary. The Lord forms man of the “dust of the ground” when our natural faculties are developed; He “breathes into his nostrils the breath of life” when knowledge of Him and faith in Him are acquired; and man becomes a “living soul” when his external life becomes an expression of love to the Lord.

The Creation story also pictures the development of the first people into a true “church,” the Most Ancient Church.

The rest of the seventh day pictures the final stage of the process in both these meanings. It is the attainment of the celestial degree, when there is no longer any sense of labor or conflict because right action has become happy and spontaneous through the inflowing love of the Lord. The Most Ancient Church was a celestial church. Its people were in love to the Lord, and so could be given a perception of the truth. We know that they afterward

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declined from this state and that the perception had to be taken away when their will became perverted. Men on earth have never since lived in the celestial state. It is, however, the high ideal toward which we should strive and one which we may attain in the end if we are sufficiently faithful here.

We may see in our own experience small examples of the process of becoming celestial. We have all acquired at least some good habits, habits which are so much a part of us now that we may forget that they had to be acquired. But in each case our original natural tendency was contrary. We first had to be taught what was right. Usually, for some time we had to be forced to do it until we came to see that it really was right. Then we forced ourselves to do it until our natural resistance gradually disappeared and the right action became “second nature.” So far as that particular thing was concerned we had reached the sabbath of rest, the celestial state.

This process must go on little by little all our lives: six days of labor before the sabbath of rest. Isaiah writes (28:10): “For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.” We all like to imagine that, since in general we mean well, something inside us will always tell us what is right. You will hear people say, “What a man thinks is right is right for him.” This is an attempt to jump from the first day to the seventh without any of the labor of the intervening days—and it just can’t be done. We really know this. If we are honest with ourselves, we know we have made many mistakes which we might have avoided if we had been willing to study and think and correct our own judgment by the teachings of the Word of God.

The sabbath of rest comes from the Lord. It is not, either literally or spiritually, a day of idle loafing. It is a day and a state in which selfish thoughts and desires and strivings are put aside and we give ourselves wholeheartedly to the service of the Lord and the neighbor. It is natural that we should grow up thinking of Sunday in terms of what we must not do on that day. The rule of

life is “Cease to do evil; learn to do well.” But it is not the ceasing from evil which makes the sabbath blessed and sanctified; it is the learning to do well.

The Pharisees, you may remember, had made the sabbath a hard day with their many prohibitions, and the Lord brushed away these prohibitions with the simple statement, “It is lawful to do good on the sabbath.” The sabbath state is a positive, not a negative one. Doing good means active effort to learn about the Lord, to worship Him, and to engage in such works as will make others happy and ourselves nearer to the ideal given us by the Lord. Such a use of our Sundays may not seem easy or happy to us at first, but practice in this, more perhaps than in any other good habit, will bring great reward.



Adult

After the introductory statement concerning the Bible, and the brief review of chapter 1, the teacher should touch on the meaning of the seventh day in the internal historical sense and in the spiritual sense, and then go on to a discussion of the use of the sabbath. It may be well to mention the reason why we observe Sunday instead of Saturday (see Junior notes) especially if there are young adults in the class. The rest of the discussion may well be based on the Lord’s use of the sabbath, and the teacher should be familiar with the Gospel passages cited in the Junior notes and with their context.

Every time we reread the story of creation, with which our Bible begins, we are more impressed with its scope and importance. From the letter alone we receive the fundamental teachings that everything with which we are familiar was created by the Lord, that there is a Divine order in the universe, that man is not merely a higher animal but a creature with heavenly possibilities, that man has the responsibility of controlling and using rightly all the lower forms of creation, and that the ideal state to which he should look forward is one of heavenly peace and happiness. In the Creation story nothing appears which is not good and useful. “And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.” The Lord is the Source of all good and nothing but good proceeds

from Him.

When we read this story with a knowledge of its spiritual sense, it is still more impressive. Everything that is in man's soul appears here in its original orderly form. Throughout it is the story of the formation of man—as a race and as an individual—into the image and likeness of God, his highest possible attainment.

In the three previous lessons we have considered the first six days of creation in some detail, and we now center our attention on the seventh day.

Limiting our thought for the moment to the letter, we rightly think of Genesis 2:2-3 as the Divine institution of the sabbath day. The commandment regarding the sabbath given through Moses from Sinai was not a new commandment. The sabbath was a part of the order of the Most Ancient Church. The Lord, who made man, knew man's needs. Even physically we need one day out of seven of rest and change from our regular work. Our minds need this same rest and change. And above all spiritually we need one day in seven in which we may lift our thoughts above our worldly concerns and renew our inner strength through worship, instruction, and meditation.

In this simple statement of the Divine ordination of the sabbath there is nothing harsh—nothing suggestive of prohibition: “And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.” If we developed in an orderly way as children of our Heavenly Father, we should have no problems concerning the sabbath. We should, as Isaiah suggests (58:13), “call the sabbath a delight.” The reason why the breaking and profaning of the sabbath is connected with such severe denunciation later in the Word is that men departed from their true order and that without the regular observance of the sabbath men become immersed in worldliness and selfishness, lose their touch with God, and die spiritually. Our Puritan forefathers were mistaken in making the sabbath a hard and burdensome day, just as the Pharisees were mistaken in adding their own interpretations to the simple law. We recall how many

times in the Gospel story the Pharisees accused the Lord of breaking the sabbath and how He told them that He Himself was Lord of the sabbath. He gave us our example specifically in attending the synagogue on the sabbath day, teaching, healing, and walking with his disciples, and He summed up the law in the simple statement (Matthew 12:12): “It is lawful to do good on the sabbath.”

Turning to the inner meaning of our lesson, we find this in AC 83, 84: “The ‘heavens and earth and all the army of them’ are said to be ‘finished,’ when man has become the ‘sixth day,’ for then faith and love make a one. When they do this, love, and not faith, or in other words the celestial principle, and not the spiritual, begins to be the principal, and this is to be a celestial man. . . . The celestial man is the ‘seventh day,’ which, as the Lord has worked during the six days, is called ‘His work’; and as all combat then ceases, the Lord is said to ‘rest from all His work.’”

The Most Ancient Church, whose development is described in the internal historical sense of our lesson, was a celestial church, in which love to the Lord ruled in the heart and truth could be given by perception—in an internal rather than in an external way. We forget sometimes that this first church had to be developed—that even the first men had to grow into it through the various stages pictured in the Creation story, and had to become spiritual men before they became celestial.

In its application to our own regeneration this is also true. Although it is certainly possible for us, if we are faithful, to attain the celestial degree, we do not attain it before the end of our life in this world. But we all may have foretastes of it. For example, whenever we recognize a particular evil in ourselves, fight it with the Lord’s help, and reach the point where it no longer has any appeal for us, we have—with regard to that particular evil—reached the sabbath of rest. But as long as we are in this world there are always further evils in us to recognize and fight. And we recognize and fight these only if we are constantly trying to learn new truth from the Word. In this world we never reach a state in which the knowledge of what is right comes to us by an internal way. The

writings are very clear on this point. Our conscience is never a perfect guide. It must be continually corrected, educated, and developed throughout our lives here. Without this process we make no spiritual progress and never attain the true sabbath of rest.

This rest of the sabbath is not idleness. It is rest from struggle with temptation. It is said that the Lord blessed and sanctified the seventh day, that is, pronounced it happy and holy. We know that happiness comes only from forgetting self, and that only as we learn about the Lord and seek to serve Him and the neighbor is it possible for us to make a place in our hearts for the influx of His unselfish love. If we regularly use the sabbath for worship, instruction, and unselfish service, we shall find it our best aid in attaining the celestial state of rest. Let us use it to “do good” and make it a happy and a holy day.

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Arcana Coelestia, nn. 82-83: “*And the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the army of them.* By these words is meant that man is now rendered so far spiritual as to have become the ‘sixth day’; ‘heaven’ is his internal man, and ‘earth’ his external; ‘the army of them’ are love, faith, and the knowledges thereof, which were previously signified by the great luminaries and the stars. . . . Both ‘heaven’ and ‘earth’ are predicated of man; for although they refer primarily to the Most Ancient Church, yet the interiors of the Word are of such a nature that whatever is said of the church may also be said of every individual member of it, who, unless he were a church, could not possibly be a part of the church, just as he who is not a temple of the Lord cannot be what is signified by the temple, namely, the church and heaven. It is for this reason that the Most Ancient Church is called ‘man,’ in the singular number.

“The ‘heavens and the earth and all the army of them’ are said to be ‘finished,’ when man has become the ‘sixth day,’ for then faith and love make a one. When they do this, love, and not faith, or in other words the celestial principle, and not the spiritual, begins to be the principal, and this is to be a celestial man.”

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- P. What book do we study in Sunday School? *Bible*
- P. Who is its Author? *God*
- P. What is the first book in the Bible? *Genesis*
- P. What does *Genesis* mean? *the beginning*
- P. Can you repeat the first verse of the Bible? *In the beginning . . .*
- P. What was given to the world on the first day of creation? *light*
- J. In how many days was creation finished? *six*
- J. Does *day* mean our day of twenty-four hours? *no*
- J. What was the Lord's final creation? *man*
- I. How is man different from the animals? *image of God*
- I. What dominion or power was given to man? *all earth*
- J. What did the Lord say of creation when He had finished it? *it was good*
- P. What did He do on the seventh day? *rested*
- J. How did He set the seventh day apart from other days?
blessed and sanctified it
- J. What does *blessed* mean? *made happy*
- J. What does *sanctified* or *hallowed* mean? *holy*
- J. When the Lord was on earth, what did He say it is lawful to do
on the sabbath? *good*
- J. What things did He Himself do on the sabbath?
worshiped, taught, healed, ate with friends
- I. What do we mean by (1) *celestial*, and (2) *spiritual* states?
(1) doing right spontaneously from love
(2) doing right according to truth
- S. Spiritually, what is the rest of the Sabbath Day?
rest from struggle with temptation